Legend of Speakers:
JD: Jennifer Davis, session facilitator
JM: Janine McFadden, session presenter
KS: Kenneth Steve, session presenter

JD: (Slide 1) Good afternoon, and welcome to *Behind the Numbers: Exploring Transportation Statistics*, hosted by the Bureau of Transportation Statistics and the U.S. Department of Transportation.   My name is Jennifer Davis, and I will be your facilitator for today's session.

JD: Before we get started, we have a few "housekeeping" items to note:

1. This webinar is being recorded, both the presentation and the audio, and will be posted online for future reference in about a week. Everyone registered for today's session will receive an email with a link once the information has been posted.
2. All participants have been placed in "listener only mode", otherwise known as mute. As back-up, we ask that everyone go to the top of their screens and click off the green audio icon.
3. If you have a question for a presenter, feel free to type it into the "chat" box in the lower left hand corner of your screen, and we will do our best to answer as many questions as we can during the allotted time. If time runs out, any additional questions submitted will be addressed in the online presentation posting.
4. Thank you!

JD: (Slide 2) Now, on with the show! Today's topic is *National Census of Ferry Operators: Past, Present, and Future*. We are pleased to have with us:

- Mr. Kenneth Steve, with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics at the US Department of Transportation; and
- Ms. Janine McFadden, also with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics at the US Department of Transportation

JD: Our first speaker this afternoon is Kenneth Steve. Ken began working for BTS in 2009, where he has been primarily focused as the project manager for the NCFO (including the 2010 and 2014 censuses). He received his Master's degree in Measurement & Statistics from Florida State University and honed his statistical skills with The Nielsen Company (you know, TV ratings).

Before Ken begins, Janine will give a brief overview of what will be covered in today's webinar.

JM: Thank you, Jennifer. Hello and thank you again for joining us today for this exciting webinar on the National Census of Ferry Operators. My name is Janine McFadden, and I'm the

current project manager of the NCFO. The NCFO is a product of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics and is currently in its 6th round of data collection since its inception in 2000.

JM: (Slide 3) Today, we have Ken Steve, project manager of the 2010 and 2014 NCFO presenting on the history of the NCFO, the NCFO website, as well as highlights from the 2014 NCFO results. I will then present on the 2016 NCFO; including information on the development of and updates made to the 2016 questionnaire, the status of the current data collection efforts, as well as insights into the next NCFO in 2018. Between each of the presentations we will pause to answer your questions. Now, I'll turn it over to Ken.

KS: Thank you, Janine.

KS: (Slide 4) Hello everyone. To get us started I want to give a brief history on NCFO:

- TEA–21 directed the Secretary of Transportation to conduct a study of ferry transportation in the United States and its possessions. In 2000, the FHWA Office conducted a survey of approximately 250 ferry operators to identify existing ferry operations, the locations and routes served, the source and amount, if any, of funds derived from Federal, State, or local governments supporting ferry construction or operations.
- SAFETEA-LU) required that the Secretary, acting through BTS, establish and maintain (biennially) a national ferry database containing current information regarding routes, vessels, passengers and vehicles carried, funding sources and such other information as the Secretary considers useful.
- MAP-21 continued the BTS mandate to conduct the NCFO and required that the FHWA use the NCFO data to set the specific formula for allocating federal ferry funds. The funding allocations are based on a percentage of the number of passenger boardings, vehicle boardings, and route miles served. This legislation also required that BTS make additional changes to the NCFO questionnaire to ensure that the resulting database was consistent with the National Transit Database maintained by the Federal Transit Administration FTA.

KS: (Slide 5) A number of changes were made in 2010. These changes included:

- We conducted cognitive interviews - 5 interviews were conducted among 4 different operators, and more changes were made based on the interview results
- We reviewed the old form and corresponding data – including reformatting the paper questionnaire, modifying question wording (stems and responses), and deleted some questions and added new questions

- We created a web version based on finalized paper questionnaire – using discrete user IDs, we pre-populated with 2008 data (based on static information) and allowed operators to modify/add/delete information as needed.

KS: (Slide 6) additional changes were made in 2014 based on user feedback. These changes included:

- Expanding the response options for revenue streams
- Removing questions about peak ridership times and counts
- Expanding vessel characteristic questions, such as
  - ownership and operation
  - fuel mileage
  - ADA accessible
  - engine lifespan (2012 hours and miles)
- Expanding terminal characteristic questions, such as ownership and operation
- Expanding route characteristic questions, such as regulations and vessel most commonly used
- And Expanding funding source questions, including agency type, name and program

KS: Now we'll take a look at the NCFO website, starting with the Home Page (cut to live website; slide deck has still shots of the various website subpages). The website was developed in 2010 as a landing site where information on the NCFO efforts could be accessed by the public. It provides resources to stakeholders and increase transparency with NCFO methodology, and contains background info, census coverage, a detailed description of the methodology, an overview of the database and links to data tables, and summary reports for each census year.

KS: (Slide 8) The Methods page reviews the same history of NCFO that I presented earlier, as well as information about the questionnaire design, data handling (collections, confidentiality, etc.), and historical response rates.

KS: (Slide 9) The Data Dictionary page helps define the various Field Names and corresponding values (such as format and character length accepted).

KS: (Slide 10) Using the NCFO Data Query tool, you can select specified criteria, including timeframe, to create custom, on-demand reports.

KS: (Slide 11) Back on the NCFO Home page, you can access links to specific data tables.

KS: (Slide 12) Slide 12 shows a pictorial representation of 2013 passenger and vehicle boarding by state, using data received from respondents to the NCFO.

KS: (Slide 13) We can also show the same data in tabular format, sorted by region, but still broken down by passengers and vehicles.

KS: (Slide 14) Again, here is a pictorial representation of 2013 ferry route miles.

KS: (Slide 15) And here is the same data in tabular format.

KS: (Slide 16) Thank you everyone for your time today. If anyone has any questions, I can be reached at kenneth.steve@dot.gov or my phone number is 202-366-4108.

JD: Thank you, Ken. We've received a few questions from our participants for you:

Q1: How do you maintain the list of all ferry operators across the United States and its territories?

A1: We have a database that we use to track the information. The database is constantly being updated.

Q2: What do you do when you do not receive a completed census form from a ferry operator when conducting the NCFO?

A2: Janine will go into addition details in a few minutes, but generally speaking we make multiple attempts to contact/remind operators about the census, when it's due, and why it's important to complete and return it.

Q3: How do you address missing data from an operator's data submission?

A3: If a census form is submitted incomplete, we will attempt to contact the submitter to either obtain the missing data or request a reason why something was left incomplete.

Q4: Can a ferry operator file the census through the NCFO website?

A4: No, the census (this year) is a paper form.

Q5: For the state total ridership slide, how were interstate route passengers calculated?

A5: As each leg of a trip is counted separately, we use the departure terminal to count.

JD: Great questions, everyone! Remember that these will be posted online along with the webinar recording shortly.

JD: Next we have Ms. Janine McFadden. Janine has managed the NCFO since January 2016. Prior to joining BTS in 2015, Janine spent three years with DOT's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, and six years with the US Census Bureau where she conducted several monthly, quarterly, and annual Manufacturing and Construction surveys, as well as the Census

of Manufactures. Janine received her Bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Virginia Tech and her Master's degree in Statistics from American University.   So, Janine, the floor is yours!

JM: Thank you for that introduction, Jennifer.

In an effort to minimize respondent burden and ensure high quality data, the 2016 questionnaire was revised. Some of these revisions included reordering of within question response items, re-wording of the instructions and questions, and removal of questions that were redundant or where the data collected was no longer utilized.

During the development process the NCFO team met with stakeholders and data users within government as well as with the Passenger Vessel Association. This feedback was critical to the process in considering additional data needs and gathering feedback on questions slated to be removed.

The most substantial reduction to respondent burden on the 2016 questionnaire was made by pre-populating each operator's individual 2016 questionnaire with their historical 2014 and 2010 responses. Pre-printing of historical information eliminated the need for operators to list out their vessel, terminal, and segment names.   On the upcoming slides I will go into detail on some of these updates that were made to the 2016 form.

JM: First, here is a screen shot of the NCFO website homepage. A copy of the 2016 NCFO Questionnaire is posted on the homepage. This link can be found below the second paragraph, entitled, Census Coverage. Here on the screen shot I have circled the link in orange.

JM: Starting with the updates to the questionnaire instructions:

- First, the authorization was updated to reflect the current legislation that mandates the NCFO, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, otherwise known as the FAST Act.
- Second, a new addition to the instructions this year is the "Uses of the Survey Data for Funding Purposes" This paragraph details how the data can be used by the Federal Highway Administration for funding purposes.
- And lastly, the "Important Respondent Information" box took the place of "Important: Updates to the Census Questionnaire" box. The purpose of this box is to highlight key respondent information for completing the 2016 questionnaire.

JM: Next, updates made to question 1, which collects operator contact information, are indicated here within the orange boxes.

- These updates include moving the "correct" check box to the end of the form. This box is checked by respondents when no changes need to be made to the pre-printed contact information on each line.
- In addition, ample empty space was opened up in the middle of each line for operators to correct or update their information, if needed.
- This page was also reduced in length by removing three lines of information, the contact job title 1, contact job title 2, and the secondary fax number lines, as this information was no longer necessary to collect.
- At the bottom right hand side of the form, encircled in purple is the unique 2 or 3 digit NCFO operator ID. The NCFO ID was added to every page of the questionnaire for administrative purposes.

JM: Displayed here are updates to question 4.

- Updates to question 4 include pre-printed vessel information, including vessel name and the corresponding NCFO vessel ID, along with the vessel's USCG number as displayed in the orange boxes on the left hand side of the form.
- The bolded header above the item response information on the right hand side of the form was added to instruct the respondent to complete the boxes below for each vessel listed on the left.
- On the bottom of the form an additional line of instruction was added to inform the respondent to enter any vessels not already listed on the blank spaces provided, and that if additional sheets are needed they may be attached.
- These updates are carried through all the questions pertaining to vessels as you will see displayed on the following slides.

JM: Here question 5 continues the collection of vessel information and contains the same updates that were made to question 4.

JM: Here question 6 displays those same updates for the collection for vessel information.

In addition, displayed in yellow, one of the fuel type item responses was updated. In 2014, there was an option for CNG, or compressed natural gas. Since the results of the 2014 NCFO showed that no vessels used CNG, it was replaced with LNG or Liquefied Natural Gas which is known to be an emerging fuel type for vessels.

JM: Question 7 is the final question that collects information on vessels. Again the same updates made to question 4 are carried through to this question.

In addition, a few of the response items were revised, as displayed in the yellow boxes. They include:

- Updating "Number of Hours since Rebuild" to "Year Built"
- Updating "Annual Miles" to "Distance Traveled (in nautical miles)"
- And moving the ADA accessible check-box over two columns.

JM: The next set of questions pertains to operator terminals.

Here, displayed within the orange boxes are updates to question 8, which includes pre-printed terminal information, such as; an operator's terminal names with corresponding NCFO terminal ID, as well as the terminal's city and State or Province. At the bottom is an additional line of instruction to remind respondents that if there is a terminal not pre-printed it can be added on one of the blank lines provided and that additional sheets can be attached, if needed.

JM: As displayed, the pre-printing of terminal name and ID, along with updated the text at the bottom of the questionnaire were also applied to question 9, as they were to question 8.

In addition, circled in yellow, the key word public was added to both the ownership and operation columns to further emphasize what the directions state, which is that the owner and/or operator name should be reported only if it is a publically owned and/or operated terminal.

JM: The next set of questions pertains to operator segments.

Starting with question 10, the updates are displayed within the orange boxes. These updates include pre-printed departure and arrival terminals and their corresponding NCFO segment ID.

In bold above the right hand side of the form, instructions were added for the respondent to "please complete these boxes for each terminal listed on the left". Also, on this side of the form, an additional column was added. The "All Year" check box, which you'll find circled in yellow. The "all-year" box was added so that if a respondent operates a particular segment or segments from January 1 through December 31 they can check this box rather than write in 01/01, 12/31 in the month and year boxes. This check box was added in hopes of further reducing burden.

The additional line of instruction on the bottom directs respondents to add any additional segments not already listed and to please attach additional sheets, if needed.

The updates made to question 10 are carried through all the questions pertaining to segments as will be seen on the following slides.

JM: Question 11 continues the collection of segment information and contains the same updates that were described for question 10.

JM: Question 12 also continues the collection of segment information and contains the same updates that were described for question 10.

JM: Question 13, concludes the collection of segment information and contains those same updates described for question 10. Also, the addition of the key word "bicycles" (highlighted in yellow) was made to both the item response columns "calendar year total boardings" and "average daily Boardings" so that boardings by bike are included in the passenger count.

JM: This question also concludes the updates to the questionnaire.

JM: This timeline shows that…

- The 2016 NCFO is currently well under way.
- To recap what has happened so far; in late March all US ferry operators were emailed a pre-notification letting them know that their 2016 census questionnaire was coming soon.
- In early April, all known ferry operators across the U.S. and the Virgin Islands were sent their census packets.
- A month later, in May, the first round of non-response telephone follow up was conducted over a three week period.
- Then in early June emails were sent out to all operators. Thank you emails were sent to those who had responded and a reminder was sent to those respondents that had not responded. Also, included in those emails was information on this very webinar. If you received that email and are listening in now, thank you for joining us!
- Also in June, the second round of telephone follow-up was conducted.
- Currently we are in the third and final round of telephone follow-up

JM: In summary, over 65% of all questionnaires that were mailed have been completed and mailed back to us. Responses are still coming in and we are still accepting responses but the deadline for response is quickly approaching. Data will begin to be process and analyzed starting next month, and the finalized 2016 NCFO data and summary tables are planned to be released in early 2017.

JM: With the 2016 NCFO well under way plans for the 2018 NCFO are already evolving. Some of the anticipated changes that are planned for the next NCFO, include:

- An electronic data collection tool
- Many of you have asked for an option to respond to the questionnaire electronically, at this time we are working to have a web-based data collection tool that is user-friendly and ready to use in 2018.

- For those respondents that do not wish to respond electronically in the future, there will always be the option to respond by paper.
- Additionally, for 2018, we anticipate an updated database that will allow for easier access and use of current and historic NCFO data
- And lastly, a new and improved NCFO webpage.

JM: Thank you so much for your time and interest.

If you would like to be in contact, I can be reached at Janine.mcfadden@dot.gov. You can also email ferry@dot.gov and one of us here at BTS on the ferry team will respond. Or if you would like to call us, you can do so using this 1-800 number. The NCFO webpage can be accessed at the following link, or by googling BTS NCFO.

Thank you!!!

JD: Thank you, Janine! We also have received some questions for you…

Q1: Should I respond to the Census if I am unable to complete the entire questionnaire?

    A1: Yes. Any information that is submitted is helpful.

Q2: Why were private ferry operators omitted from the census?

    A2: Private ferry operators are not omitted from the census. If you know of a private ferry operator who would like to participate but has not received a survey, please have them contact me or any member of the NCFO census team.

Q3: Are you planning to have this web-based, like NTD?

    A3: Yes, we are looking into having a web-based census in the future.

Q4: If you add service during the summer, but keep the route year-round, is it considered a seasonal route or a yearly route?

    A4: This would be considered a year-round route.

Q5: What is the percentage of responses received?

    A5: As of today we have about a 65% response rate.

Q6: Is there a way I can confirm the receipt of my submission?

    A6: Yes, feel free to contact myself, or any member of the NCFO team at 800-853-1351 or ferry@dot.gov.

Q7: Is it the responsibility of State DOTs to contact ferries operating in their state to confirm they received the survey and returned it to BTS?

A7: We appreciate any help the state DOTs can give to remind operators to return their surveys, but it is not their "responsibility", per se.

Q8: Is there a formal way to include route regulators and not just operators in the process? We can be helpful in getting responses and have caught data errors in the past (but late in the process)

A8: Great suggestion, please contact me at janine.mcfadden@dot.gov to discuss offline.

Q9: How do I know if my service providers (operators) have turned in the survey?

A9: You can contact the NCFO team at 800-853-1351 or ferry@dot.gov.

Q10: What kind of reasons are given for operations who provided input in the past but not this time.

A10: Sometimes an operator may cease operations; otherwise, we don't really see this situation very often.

Q11: In the distance travelled section, is that distance for one way or round trip?

A11: Since the distance is from Terminal I to Terminal II, it would be one-way. The return trip would be captured on the next line (Terminal II to Terminal I).

Q12: How can one find a terminal ID #?

A12: In lieu of an ID number, you can enter the terminal name and city/state. If you are unsure of this information, you can contact the NCFO team for further guidance.

Q13: Do terminal ID #s need to be on the survey?

A13: For those who have submitted a survey in the past, Terminal IDs will be pre-printed on the form. If you adding a new terminal used, you can enter the terminal name and city/state for this cycle and the information will be pre-populated for you in the next census.

Q14: Do you share survey results/responses with state DOTs?

A14: The census results are available to the general public, including state DOTs, through the NCFO website. We anticipate the 2016 results to be available in early 2017.

Q15: When will the next ferry census cycle commence? 2018?

A15: Yes, the next census cycle will be in 2018.

Q16: I spoke with a private operation in our state and was told they didn't receive a census survey because they are not eligible for public funding.

>   A16: If they are interested in submitting their data, they can contact the NCFO team at 800-853-1351 or ferry@dot.gov to request a survey.

Q17: Do we still have time to submit 2016 data?

>   A17: Yes! We are officially accepting data through this Friday, July 29, but will continue to accept up until we start data processing.

Q18: How does the data collected help the ferry operators?

>   A18: The data collected from the census, among other things, may influence funding allocation as described in 23 USC 147(d), and is also useful to trade associations.

Q19: Is the NCFO provided to FHWA for FBD funding? Is the data verified by a third party? For example, our state DOT collects monthly ferry ridership surveys to include vehicles, passengers, and much more info. FHWA state division offices recently asked their states to verify their listing of ferry operators in their state. This happened after the NCFO was underway. They were missing several ferries in our state, including private. I'll be in touch with Janine.

>   A19: Thanks, my email is Janine.mcfadden@dot.gov.

JD: These were great questions, everyone! So we've reached the end of our session today. We would like to thank Ken Steve and Janine McFadden for presenting here today. We would also like to thank all of you for joining in today's session.

JD: Remember that these presentations will be posted online along with the webinar recording shortly, so watch your emails!

JD: Our next BTS Webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, October 25th, and the topic will be *Geospatial Data and Analysis for Transportation*. You can find out more information about all of the BTS Webinars by visiting www.rita.gov/bts/webinars.

JD: Thanks again, everyone. We hope you can join us on October 25th!